

John R. Reilly Oral History Interview – RFK#4, 02/22/1973
Administrative Information

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Biographical Note

John R. Reilly was a campaign worker for John F. Kennedy for President, 1960; Assistant to the Deputy Attorney General and Chief for the Executive Office of United States Attorneys for Department of Justice, 1961 – 1964. This interview focuses on the impact of John F. Kennedy's [JFK] assassination on Robert F. Kennedy's [RFK] role in the Justice Department, Reilly's appointment to the Federal Trade Commission, and RFK's 1968 presidential campaign, among other issues.

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John R. Reilly – RFK #4

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Fourth Oral History Interview

with

JOHN R. REILLY

February 22, 1973
Washington, D.C.

By Larry J. Hackman

For the Robert F. Kennedy
Oral History Program of
the John F. Kennedy Library

HACKMAN: When you were still in the Justice Department in early 1964, can you remember conversations in the Justice Department or with people around the country about the possibility of entering Robert Kennedy's name in presidential primaries, or just making some kind of effort on his behalf that spring? You know, there were some rumblings in New Hampshire and a bid in Wisconsin maybe.

REILLY: I'm aware of the fact that there were a lot of people who were interested in Robert Kennedy becoming active in '64 in the presidential race. But the people that I would talk to were more, I guess, practical politicians and tried to be less emotional about the damn thing, and really didn't consider the possibility of him running in '64, but did consider the possibility of attempting to force [Lyndon B.] Johnson to choose him as vice president. I never discussed it with Bob Kennedy, and I'm frankly not too aware of what his reaction to that activity was.

At that point [Kenneth P.] Kenny O'Donnell and I were very close and there was some activity taking place with some of the political leaders in the country such as Jesse Unruh [Jesse M. Unruh], people in Pennsylvania, Mayor [Richard J.] Daley, other whom you could call pros, to bring some big pressures on President Johnson to interest him in using Bob

Kennedy. I think--at least my impression was--that he had never had any intention of even considering it, but felt this pressure and didn't know quite how to get out of it. And everybody is familiar with the "no cabinet member statement--you know, that type of thing. But there was activity, primarily led by O'Donnell, up until the day he issued the statement.

HACKMAN: Is it fair to say that the people who were active on that front then quickly switched to a sort of united effort on behalf of [Hubert H.] Humphrey?

REILLY: Yes. Yes.

HACKMAN: That's as much as I need on that. What kind of impact did the assassination of John Kennedy have on Robert Kennedy's performance in the Justice Department in '64? Obviously there are other factors--Lyndon Johnson's in the White House--but just in the way he dealt with business and the attention he gave to things. How do you get at that? Can you get at that?

REILLY: Yeah. My involvement in that was really peripheral, because it was just at that time that I was appointed to the Federal Trade Commission [FTC] and left the Justice Department. I was aware of the fact that Bob was not around and was not taking any interest in what was going on in the Justice Department. I was aware of the fact that he was coming back in and trying to get interested in it. I think that it was in about January of '64 that I attended a little party up in his office at which he gave us cufflinks, and a certain group of people. Evidently they were cufflinks which he intended to give us at Christmastime and really couldn't bring himself to do. So this was in the early part of, I guess it was, January '64. And I am sure you are familiar with the cufflinks, and the reasons they were given--I mean, they were mementoes of the years we spent with him.

HACKMAN: You mentioned earlier, people looking back might think that you were the Kennedy person on the FTC. Why don't you just talk briefly about the way your appointment came about, and then any contacts there were on matters before the FTC with Robert Kennedy or with [Joseph F.] Dolan or the office or whatever over the next several years.

REILLY: Well, I think we'll start with how the appointment came about. Well, first of all, I had an interest in antitrust or trade regulation work, and it appeared to me that the best place to move up in government at that point and keep with the interest was at the FTC regulatory agency. I thought it personally would be helpful. I talked to Kenny O'Donnell and [Lawrence F.] Larry O'Brien

and [Richard K.] Dick Donahue--not together but at different times--about this, and they thought it was entirely possible. They were aware of vacancies coming up on the Federal Trade Commission, the fact that I had an antitrust background, the fact that I was. . . .

There was some dissatisfaction with the commission, in that--and I've never really put my finger on just exactly what it was--those individuals seemed to have the impression that once they appointed somebody to a commission that they were ignored from then on; that they immediately became ultra-independent and couldn't be spoken to about anything. I think that they had a feeling that since I was a kind of a Kennedy loyalist and had gone through the campaign with them, that I was not going to refuse their telephone calls. Unbeknownst to me, at the same time Joe Dolan was attempting to get on a regulatory agency. I subsequently learned that he was working through [Theodore C.] Ted Sorensen up that route while I was going up the other. And in about, I guess it was, October of '63, I was aware that something was happening, that I was being considered. I was never quite sure about how. I was not telling anybody about it. Nobody in the Justice Department knew about it. And one day I got a telephone call from Ralph Dungan [Ralph A. Dungan], and he said, "As far as we're concerned, you are going to be the next commissioner." He says, "I think the ball is in your court though. I think you'd better make sure that Bobby Kennedy approves." So I immediately went up to see Bob and discussed it with him and said that I had this opportunity, that the people at the White House were supporting me, and that I hoped that he wouldn't have any objection, that my leaving the Justice Department had no reflection upon disinterest or dissatisfaction, I just wanted to further myself.

One thing I always remember. In hindsight, it was rather strange, although I didn't consider it strange at the time. I mean, he started to talk about the fact that he understood perfectly what I was doing, and he thought it was a good idea too, who knows what's going to happen in the second four years, and who knows whether the president is going to be reelected? It was almost a fatalistic thing. He seemed to be rather depressed at the time. I think it was probably because there had been some. . . . At that time, I think historians will recall that there were serious problems with the Congress. There had been some ugly things happened, the Bay of Pigs, and so on.

HACKMAN: Can you give a fairly close date for when this is? Is this into November already?

HACKMAN: No. It was October, because I was actually nominated by the president in late October,

approximately a month before he died. So it was October that I mentioned this to Bob Kennedy and he said that he fully approved of my seeking this office and he would support me. Actually I had gone up there just asking him not to object to me. I was unaware of the fact that Dolan was going the same route, and I kind of had the impression that he was, too.

I got a call from Kenny O'Donnell one day and he said, "Do you have a resume?" I said "Yes, I do" and he said, "Will you bring it over to the White House." I took it over to the White House and handed it to him and he said, "The president is going to announce his intention to appoint you to the Federal Trade Commission at 12 o'clock." This was 11:30. And then a few minutes later [Pierre] Salinger came in and asked me a few questions, and they announced at noon that day that the president intended to appoint me to the Federal Trade Commission.

I went back to the Justice Department. [Nicholas B.] Nick Katzenbach was deputy at that time, and I figured that I'd better tell Nick since I hadn't even told him I was interested. I walked into his office and I think Nick was terribly shocked at the whole thing. And one thing that has always stuck in my mind that pointed out the fact that he was shocked and upset--not because I was leaving, but simply because he wasn't aware of the whole thing--and that was that he completely failed to congratulate me or wish me luck or anything of that nature. It was not a purposeful oversight, but just because he was floored by the whole thing.

I was supposed to replace a commissioner named [A. Leon, Jr.] Higginbotham on the Federal Trade Commission, and the reason there was going to be a vacancy was because he was going to be a federal judge in Philadelphia. I'm rather vague on this, but obviously I couldn't take that seat until the seat became vacant, and the seat was not going to become vacant until he was named as the judge. His nomination was stalled. He is black, and I'm sure that had something to do with it. It was stalled in the [U.S.] Senate. He had the full support of [William J.] Billy Green, who at that point was handling most of the patronage of Pennsylvania, so that was not the problem. The problem had to be in the Senate with [James O.] Eastland or somebody of that nature.

So here I was nominated, but not able to take office. My chronology on this--I'd have to check some records, but--as I recall, my hearings were held prior to the president's death. There was some small problem, that I was confused with the other John Reilly [John F. Reilly], and there were questions asked about wiretapping and so on. I think I've covered that in the other one [Interview]. Although my hearings were held,

my nomination was not reported out because they were holding that because of the other, Higginbotham. And then the president's death, of course, caused the turmoil that everybody remembers, and Congress went home in December. Since it was the end of a Congress, my nomination actually lapsed. So I was in a position of having resigned from the Justice Department, my replacement was there, and I was not nominated to the Federal Trade Commission. It was important to me that Johnson nominate me when Congress came back, and I think I have told the story about how Johnson nominated me.

HACKMAN: On the other transcript?

REILLY: I think so.

HACKMAN: I was thinking you hadn't, but maybe I'm wrong.

REILLY: Well, it was a rather simple thing, in that Kenny O'Donnell was my man in the White House, and of course he was still working for Johnson. The day that Congress came back the new nominations were to be sent up, and O'Donnell put mine in front of President Johnson, who did not know me. He asked O'Donnell who I was, and O'Donnell quickly said, "He is Daley's man," which I wasn't. And Johnson said, "Oh, how wonderful," and signed his name, and that was the end of that. I think that I went through the entire Johnson administration being considered Daley's man on the Federal Trade Commission.

HACKMAN: Let me just follow up on something you said. You were talking about your interest in antitrust matters. Did you ever talk with Robert Kennedy at the Justice Department about [Lee] Loevinger or [William H., Jr.] Orrick and the whole approach there?

REILLY: Yes. Because I had an interest in antitrust and had been in the Antitrust Division in the field office for three years, when the attorney general got involved in choosing a staff in late 1960 and '61 I took an interest in. . . . [INTERRUPTION]

HACKMAN: . . . 1961 on the appointments. You were talking with Robert Kennedy, I assume.

REILLY: Oh. Because I had an interest in the antitrust, I actually had a couple of candidates for the position of assistant attorney general in charge of the Antitrust Division, and we discussed at that time what was needed. His view at that point was pretty general, and it was apparent to me that he didn't have that much of an interest in the antitrust field, as much of an interest as he had in the other fields that the Justice Department was involved in.

Conversations over the years subsequent to that did not change my views of that. If you had to rank the areas of the Justice Department involvement that he was most interested in, you would end up with antitrust and lands on the bottom. Although he had an interest in lands because of the Indian problems and poor people and things of that nature. Antitrust was never anything he really grabbed a hold of. He felt strongly that there should be vigorous enforcement of the antitrust laws. He felt that businessmen could be criminals in the same way that labor union members could be, and he felt strongly that the simpler aspects of antitrust: price-fixing, boycott, predatory practices, things of that nature, were important to enforce. There should be action against those. But I don't think that he ever really got into the concept that antitrust was a form of consumerism, and enforcement of the antitrust laws and keeping business competitive was beneficial to the little guy.

HACKMAN: You don't recall any discussions of specific cases during that time?

REILLY: No, I do not.

HACKMAN: What about then, when you were at the FTC? Contacts either from Robert Kennedy's office or from him on matters before the FTC? Anything at all that comes up there?

REILLY: Very, very few. A few contacts regarding constituents of his from New York who perhaps had gotten a hold of him or Joe Dolan. The contacts would normally be just, What's this all about, What's happening to this guy, What's happening in this case, or What's going on down there and What are you doing about this? Usually a simple answer would suffice. I think Bob Kennedy only talked to me once about it. He just called me one morning and inquired about a matter, I told him what was happening, and that was it. Joe Dolan wrote me a couple of times. Not too much interest in it.

HACKMAN: What do you recall about his opinion of the performances of Katzenbach and then Ramsey Clark as attorney general? Is that anything you ever discussed with him personally?

REILLY: No. There has always been some vague feeling in my mind that he was a little bit disappointed in Nick. Quite frankly, I don't know enough of the background. I think it may have had something to do with the turmoil surrounding the question of whether or not the attorney general had authorized wiretapping while he was there, and whether or not Nick really had handled the thing

well.

HACKMAN: Any comments about any kinds of important changes in Robert Kennedy over the period '64 to '68? You know, a lot of people who write about Robert Kennedy have the old Robert Kennedy and the new Robert Kennedy and all this. Does that make any sense to you at all, or basically the same guy?

REILLY: To me he was basically the same guy. I think in the previous interviews I've mentioned that the thing that always intrigued me most about him was his ability to grow. You know, if you call the growth in him a new Bob Kennedy, I think then you would have to say there was a change; but to me that was always there anyhow, and it was not a big thing.

HACKMAN: Did he ever comment much about his life as a senator, how he felt about what he was doing those four years? Or are there obvious signs of discontent that were apparent to you?

REILLY: He mentioned to me one or two times on a couple of trips I took with him when I was still a federal trade commissioner, that the Senate life bored him. The necessity for being the organization or clubby type turned him off, and he just wasn't interested. He was too much of an activist. It was too slow a procedure. He just couldn't get things done the way he wanted to get them done. I think that's one of the reasons he became active in the '66 campaigns. A lot of people trying to influence him in that regard, ultimately, was the major reason for his decision in '68.

HACKMAN: Before we start talking about the decision to run in '68 and the '68 campaign, are there other things that stand out from '64 to '68? Contacts you had with him? Did he talk with you at all about who to work for in '66, for example, or campaigns?

REILLY: No. I was in kind of a goofy position. On reflection, I was probably doing things as a member of the Federal Trade Commission that I never should have done in that I was traveling with him when he went around the country supporting various congressional candidates. Nothing sticks very much in my mind. At that point there was, not an estrangement--I don't want to make it sound like that--but because so many of the Justice Department people had gone on into their own lives, into different things [practice of law, various other appointment such as mine]; and the new people, I call them, not derogatorily, but the people who were involved in the New York campaign, who were involved in his

Senate office obviously became much closer to him, and we would only see him from time to time socially or because of a specific project we were interested in. When I say we, I also mean myself. So I wasn't really too much involved in the '64 to '68 times, other than one of the old boys.

HACKMAN: When then does the possibility of a '68 race enter into your life; in a way? Either a lot of people coming to you and talking about the possibility, or direct conversations with Robert Kennedy or just in your own mind?

REILLY: I couldn't point out an earliest recollection. I'm just vaguely aware of the fact that during the summer of '67 we were all talking about it: should he do it, should he take a shot at it, is it his time, can he wait? All the people who were involved in the Kennedy thing or the Justice Department thing every time we would meet that is all we would talk about. There were always attempts to find out, What does he think about it? from Dolan or someone else who was close to him. O'Donnell, people of that nature. Nobody really had a finger on it. Nobody could quite figure it out. There was a difference of opinion. A number of people thought it was too difficult to unseat an incumbent president in a primary race. The problems of his having to go in early and take on Johnson were discussed constantly. Differences of opinion were very apparent there.

Then we got into the fall, more and more people, politicians around the country--such as Jesse Unruh; as an example--became excited about the fact the he must do it. Various governors, [Harold E.] Hughes, people of his category, if you want to call it that, began to press a little bit. They had become dissatisfied with the war, had become dissatisfied with Johnson's handling of it, looked to Bob Kennedy as the person who would change it and they would trust to change it. I can't point to specific instances, but it was just happening there. I mean, as I say, you never met anybody that you didn't discuss it with.

I became aware around October, November of that year, and I began to have a feeling that he was going to do it. I made up my own mind that if he did, I wanted to be in it, and I really began searching for a means of getting out of the Federal Trade Commission and still making a living. An occasion presented itself in that a law firm wanted me. So I resigned from the Federal Trade Commission at the end of '67 for a twofold purpose really, and that was one, to get into the practice of law, and two, to make myself available if he did go.

So after the resignation I became then much more active in the

group of people who were pushing or shoving or whatever you want to call it, trying to influence him. I made a couple of trips with him at that point. He was going through tremendous, just unbelievable, turmoil as to what he should do. I think he felt that he had to do it, but then he would be advised that it wasn't his time, wait four years. You know, "this is not the way to do it. Nobody has ever defeated an incumbent president." That was always the thing that was brought up. "You'll be considered ruthless, playing on the Kennedy image," and so on and so forth. "It would be injurious to you, it will be injurious to the entire cause." And he was constantly faced with that. I kind of got the impression that at one point it was only Ethel [Skakel] Kennedy who was telling him he must go.

An interesting thing happened about. . . . Well, everybody is familiar with that, the pressure grew, [Eugene J.] McCarthy jumped in, it began to appear that McCarthy was catching on. I mean, this was even before New Hampshire. That caused a great turmoil also, because here somebody had grabbed the constituency before him now. How would he look if he jumped in? You know, that type of thing. What would he be doing to Gene McCarthy really? Just pathetic. But it also served a purpose in that people became more aware that there was a hell of a groundswell. There was jumping to McCarthy, who were really Bob Kennedy's people, and there wasn't much trouble with the transfer if it was necessary.

I made a trip with him in early March. I think the occasion was to speak before a democratic dinner in Iowa for Governor Hughes. After the dinner speech we went up to a room that Hughes had reserved, and present in the room were Hughes and Governor of Missouri [Warren E.] Hearnes, Governor of Kansas [George] Docking, and Governor of North Dakota [William L.] Guy, and a few of Hughes' financial supporters from Des Moines, a couple of staff people of Hearnes, one staff person of Docking, myself, John Seigenthaler, and I think [Peter B.] Edelman may have been there.

HACKMAN: Yes. Peter. They were going on to California and Edelman was along on the trip. [INTERRUPTION]

HACKMAN: You were talking about that March 9 meeting, and Hughes and Hearnes, etcetera.

REILLY: Has that been covered sufficiently?

HACKMAN: Well, the only person that I have talked to about it is Edelman, and his recollections aren't that detailed, so if you can remember. . . .

REILLY: Well, to me it has always been a very interesting

meeting, and Peter maybe didn't pay as much attention to it politically as I did. Matter of fact, he was going on to see [Cesar E.] Chavez, wasn't he. Right. That helps my memory a little bit. The gist of the meeting was, We've got to do something; Johnson is going to kill us on a local level. We disagree with his. . . . Well, let me take a couple of steps back. This is Hughes talking now, with acquiescence, it seemed, by Guy and probably Docking, but not too much by Warren Hearnes.

Warren Hearnes' attitude: "Well he is the president; by God, we've got to support him. We've got to figure out a way to get behind him. He is going to hurt me in Missouri, but I just don't feel we should dump him." That type of thing. His staff people were a little different. I mean, they were pretty much of the idea that, We've got to do more than that, we've got to save ourselves in Missouri. The conversation went like that and each person would add a little. Bob would add a little. And, I don't know, "What can we do? That type of question all the time.

The meeting broke up with absolutely no conclusion having been reached; rather a disappointing meeting, I think, to most people who were in it. And subsequently Bob, Seigenthaler and myself and Edelman went up to his room, Bob Kennedy's room, and he was asking us what we thought of the meeting. We were saying that we thought it was perfectly obvious that they wanted to get behind him, if he felt like going; and that there would be support by at least Hughes, probably Docking and Guy, and questionable on Hearnes. He made a statement at that time which I always remember. He says, "You know, I don't know why the hell you guys didn't participate more in this meeting. Why didn't you get into it?" And we said, "You know because it just isn't our role. They were talking to you." He said, "Yes, but that's what I used to do for Jack." And we said, "What do you mean?" And he said, "Well, Christ, in a meeting like that I used to say, Well, all right, you are talking a lot. How many delegates do you got?" And he said, "Not one of you guys said that." I mean he needed. . . .

HACKMAN: Somebody else needed to say that.

REILLY: Yes. He couldn't say it, but he wanted us to say it. But of course Seigenthaler had just come up from Tennessee. I had just got on the trip. We weren't in the position. I mean, we hadn't been given the instructions as it were. I think if we had, why we would have done that. The interesting thing is that he recognized so much the need that he had to have a Robert Kennedy somewhere along the line. Actually he never did have during his own campaign.

HACKMAN: Anything then over the next several days before he announces that. . . .

REILLY: I do feel, by the way, that that meeting influenced him considerably. Because if we take the chronology of the thing from other meetings he was having, it was perfectly apparent that he was making up his mind at that point. It was about a week away, or less than that, from the New Hampshire primary. After that, I think I went out to see him on a Sunday. I think it was after he returned from. . . .

HACKMAN: That may just about be right, yes. Well, the announcement would have been the following Saturday, and that's the 14th and this is the 9th, so that's only five days. So you probably wouldn't have seen him on a Sunday after he got back.

REILLY: No, I don't think so.

HACKMAN: This must have been on about a Sunday night or a Monday itself.

REILLY: Then I think that the next time I saw him was the day of the New Hampshire primary, and I met him at the airport. I was going to Chicago and he was going to New York. We talked for a few minutes at the airport, and I said, "Are you going to go?" And he said, "Yeah, I think so. Let's wait and see what happens in New Hampshire." And I remember my thoughts as I flew to Chicago that night was, that he was definitely going to do it. And he was probably going to do it, no matter what the hell happened in New Hampshire. And then, of course, we all remember the decision, and the announcement, the frantic activity of getting organized.

HACKMAN: How do you then pick up into the campaign? How does your role. . . .

REILLY: Well, I had told him this Sunday that I saw him, which must have been the Sunday before, that I was prepared to give all my time and so on, and he made a little joke. He said, "All right, wonderful. If I go you will be the postmaster," you know that jokey thing, as we wandered around his backyard.

And it was rather interesting to me that he was having a lot of meetings with various people during that time, but he was keeping them apart. For instance, Jesse Unruh was in town and asked me to go over to Hickory Hill with him, and I said I didn't think I should go unless I was invited. And he said, "Well, I'll get back to you. I want you to go over with me." Well, he never did get back to me, and it was obvious that he had mentioned to Bob Kennedy, "Should I bring Reilly?" and

Bobby said no. He was doing an awful lot of that. Talking to different people, but never getting them all in the same room together which had caused enough confusion of that by that time.

Well, it was immediately after the announcement when the space was grabbed in the L Street office, and everybody just kind of started to turn up and it was like old home week. People were coming in from all over that had been involved in the Kennedy thing. Everybody was wondering what they were going to do. At that point, Kennedy asked me to work with him, and I said that I certainly would, although he didn't know exactly what he was going to be doing. About three or four days later I got a telephone call from Bob Kennedy and he said, "John, will you handle the congressional delegations? Will you handle the [Capitol] Hill?" And I said, "Certainly. What do you want me to do?" "Well, just work with those people on the Hill, the senators and congressmen. Try to get as many of them as you can to support me, and be aware of what their feelings are; how they can help, what influence they have at the convention, whether they will be delegates, and so on." That type of thing. I said, "Well, fine." A very quick conversation, a couple of minutes, and then he said, "Also work with Kenny O'Donnell." So that was my marching orders, and then immediately he took off. Actually this was before--no, immediately after he came back from the two Kansas stops in that first couple days of the campaign.

So that's what I started to do. Cleared it with my law firm, et cetera, and began to work with Kenneth, and his responsibility was primarily the nonprimary major states. We set up a little office. Paul [G.] Kirk came down from Boston as the man who would constantly be in the office taking messages, arranging meetings, and so on. I brought Lenny [Lenore] Donnelly, who had worked for me at the Federal Trade Commission and had worked in the White House for [David F.] Dave Powers and she came over and kind of served as my secretary and Kenny's. Kenny had Marge blank. We carved out our little office in the headquarters and just began to go to work with very little coordination with the rest of the campaign which marked the entire campaign at that point. Everybody was going off in different directions.

One of the major problems which I think that his campaign had was that there were actually three different groups of people in it: there were the old Jack Kennedy people, there were the Bobby Kennedy people, and then there were the [Edward M.] Teddy Kennedy people. Those with the greatest disadvantage were the Bobby Kennedy people, because our tie there was gone. He was on the road. I think some problems developed simply because of the different attitudes of the people. As in all campaigns there is a little bit of a jealousy about who gets

what and who's close to the candidate.

HACKMAN: Do the three different channels, or three different operations, does that persist all the way through the campaign, or is there any serious attempt by Robert Kennedy or anyone else to work that out before California?

REILLY: In my judgement if there was any serious effort by anyone to work it out, it was never successful. It became apparent to everybody, I think, involved that something was going to have to be done eventually, and it was going to be done immediately after the California primary. And I think--at least I've heard since that time--that there were going to be some major changes made. Since the great rush of the early primaries was over, he was going to be able to take a more active interest in the organization of his own campaign, which he really never had time to do. The think just, bang, grew up. There it was.

HACKMAN: Maybe the best think to do is just to talk about some of the larger, more important states which you worked on with O'Donnell, maybe starting with Illinois.

REILLY: Illinois, our work was limited in that we made an early decision that we would do absolutely nothing in Illinois simply because we all knew that the mayor was the key out there, and if he wanted Bob Kennedy to be his man at the convention, he was going to be. We talked to a number of people close to him. Kenny and I went out to Chicago a number of times and met with Matt [Matthew J.] Danaher and Danny [Daniel D.] Rostenkowski, Joe [Joseph P.] McMahon, others who were very close to the mayor. It became apparent to us from their conversations, although they tried to be guarded, that they had absolutely no problem in supporting Bob Kennedy but were not going to do so publicly. Since we recognized the operation of Mayor Daley's organization, we knew at that point that the mayor was for Bob Kennedy. We also knew it simply because of, well, an understanding of what type of a man he was and his great love for President Kennedy and, you know, the fact that he wanted the Kennedys back.

HACKMAN: As the campaign went on after Johnson dropped out, and Humphrey comes in and the support for Humphrey among Daley's people seems to be fairly strong, was there serious concern that that might change, that pressures would become so great that Daley would just. . . .

REILLY: Well, I should say. . . .I'll put it this way, there was none. . . .O'Donnell had none, nor did the

people working with O'Donnell. The feeling that Daley might not stick with Bobby was always others who didn't really know him very well, or didn't know anything about him, really. And, of course, it was fostered by the press and obviously the Humphrey people who constantly believed those stories.

HACKMAN: How much of a problem was it in keeping, sort of, grass roots Kennedy support, or even old John Kennedy supporters, from trying to get something going that would upset the mayor or the mayor's people in Chicago?

REILLY: That was a serious problem. Not so much the old John Kennedy supporters, who were pretty much organization people in Illinois, anyhow.

HACKMAN: You are thinking of somebody like Newton Minow [Newton N. Minow]?

REILLY: Well, I mean there's a good example. I mean, Newton Minow had to be constantly headed off or held down. We didn't really deal with him too much. He was starting by himself. [Richard C.] Dick Wade was another good example. He wanted to organize a Kennedy thing in Illinois, and we really couldn't stop him. And he did, to some extent, although he received absolutely no support from us. By us, I mean O'Donnell who had the major responsibility for Illinois.

HACKMAN: But he might be going to Sorensen or to Edward Kennedy. . . .

REILLY: Yes, and was.

HACKMAN: . . . and getting some support for those affairs. Right.

REILLY: Yes. Simply because you can't really tell a guy who wants to get behind your man that he should not do it. But some of it was handled by shipping those people to Indiana and getting them involved in other matters.

HACKMAN: Now, was that something that you people would have supported or even originated, or was that Wade's idea, to send them to Indiana?

REILLY: No, we supported it and originated it and worked it out surreptitiously. That's always the problem, and it's a particular problem in Illinois. The great fear is that when you have an organization, they don't like to see another organization growing up beside them. We just didn't want to upset the apple cart out there, and it presented

serious problems. It presented problems because there were others in the campaign who didn't quite understand that.

HACKMAN: Yes. How important is Daley as a character in other major states you were working with, as a sort of a guidepost that others would operate from? Can you pick out specifically any other people who had told you, "Well we are going to wait and see what Daley does in Illinois before we do things?"

REILLY: I think specifically Governor [Richard J.] Hughes of New Jersey constantly was interested in what Daley was doing. The Pennsylvania people were Mayor [Joseph M.] Barr of Pittsburgh and the mayor of Philadelphia, whose name I know.

HACKMAN: [James H. J.] Tate.

REILLY: Tate. Also the Michigan people were always. . . I think you could almost make a generalization that in any state where there was an organization, who recognized the power that Daley had nationally, that his support had nationally, were always constantly asking, "Have you got Daley? Have you got Daley?" And we had to be always very, very careful about that, by saying, "yes we did, but. . . ." You know, we had to be careful about who we told it to, simply because we couldn't blow his cover.

HACKMAN: Right. How does O'Brien fit into the campaign when he comes in from what you can see? What had your relationship been with him, and how did people like yourself work with this disagreement between O'Brien and O'Donnell?

REILLY: Well, you know, my relationship was with O'Donnell. I had absolutely nothing to do with O'Brien. O'Brien's activity in the campaign, at least anything that I was connected with, was absolutely nil. There was no way that he could have helped in the areas that we were working in, and therefore there was never any real crossing of lines. The only problem we ever had was in Michigan, and at one point Sorensen started to take it over and O'Donnell just said, "Take it over."

HACKMAN: When [Joseph F.] Crangle was coming in?

REILLY: Yes. But Crangle went in as O'Donnell's. O'Donnell put Crangle in Michigan.

HACKMAN: Oh, really?

REILLY: Yes.

HACKMAN: I didn't know that.

REILLY: You have got to remember, in those first couple of weeks everybody was doing things and making assignments and, hell, things happened before you knew them. But I was never aware of anything that Larry, particularly. . . .

HACKMAN: Can you remember in Michigan, then, particular people that you dealt with, or that you recall the situation with? [G. Mennen] Williams, [Jerome P.] Cavanagh, [Carl B.] Stokes, or [Neil F.] Staebler, any of them?

REILLY: No, I don't. Jack Conway [Jack Thomas Conway], solely.

HACKMAN: Right. Was Conway during the campaign more or less working for O'Donnell, would you say?

REILLY: No, Conway was working for [Walter P.] Reuther, but because of his friendship with O'Donnell, was telling O'Donnell what was going on.

HACKMAN: What about Ohio? Any details on Ohio that are clear in your mind in terms of Stephen [M.] Young, sort of is on, and then goes off again?

REILLY: The Stephen Young thing was caused by a very simple thing. It came from the type of thing I was talking about. Everybody doing their own thing without really checking with one another. Or some people involved that weren't aware of the political implications. And the Steve Young thing happened simply because John Glenn [John H. Glenn, Jr.] was scheduled into Ohio to make some speeches and. . . .

HACKMAN: That's what turned it around?

REILLY: Forgetting the history of Steve Young-Glenn previously, and Steve Young just said, "The hell with it. If that's the kind of game they are going to play, if they are not going to pay any attention to me, even though I have announced my support for Robert Kennedy, I'm going to announce that I've changed." Everybody that knows Steve Young knows that there was no problem in him doing that. He made up his mind in that way.

HACKMAN: What about [John J.] Gilligan, how to handle Gilligan or whether to support Gilligan?

REILLY: That was absolutely no problem. I mean, Jack Gilligan was completely Bob Kennedy. Our only

problem was in not hurting Jack Gilligan, not making Jack Gilligan identified too much with Bob Kennedy which would have injured him with Frank [W.] King and others who were supporting Humphrey. Our involvement in Ohio was with those leaders who were ours: Jerry [Eugene P.] O'Grady, the state chairman, was ours, [Howard M.] Metzenbaum.

HACKMAN: How helpful was [Michael V.] DiSalle?

REILLY: Very helpful, very helpful. Although he did not have the power in Ohio that he once had, he was extremely helpful. Obviously he was helpful in the Toledo area, but simply because he knew the players he was helpful, and was fully supportive of Bobby.

HACKMAN: How important was the trip that Robert Kennedy took in when [Albert] Bert Porter rode with him in the thing, and then supposedly the delegation decides that it is going to remain uncommitted, or whatever? Is the trip itself the key, or had enough groundwork been done anyway so that. . . .

REILLY: No, there had been an awful lot of groundwork done, and that was the goal. Because everybody wanted Ohio to come at the time when Ohio would mean something to come. It wasn't enough attention being paid to it by the candidates simply because of the primaries. The groundwork was being done with Porter, with O'Grady, by Di Salle, by O'Donnell, by others, by Gilligan. And the trip that Bob Kennedy made in there was exceptionally important. It impressed the people over there--I mean the delegates--so much. I mean it was bad in a way simply because we had them in a hotel downtown and waiting for two hours while he was coming in from the airport. The turnout coming in from the airport was so incredible, it was very impressive. The meetings that Bob Kennedy had with the various delegations from within Ohio were very important. Even though he was dead tired, he was quite impressive. He would meet with each area delegation, county delegation, and answer any questions that were necessary, and that whole evening was just a complete ten-strike.

There is a rather funny incident, maybe somebody else has mentioned it. When he met with the Cuyahoga County delegation, which is Cleveland, about two o'clock in the morning, by the time when we got in there, and they had been sitting around and everybody was doing a little drinking that night. We kept closing the bar and opening the bar. A few people got a little smashed. They stuck around, which was the amazing thing in the first place, that they even talked to Bob Kennedy that night. So we got into the Cuyahoga delegation about two o'clock in the morning and there was a young girl in there who stood up

at one point and said, "Senator Kennedy, how does the wife of an uncommitted delegate get her husband to be for you?" There were a few snickers. I remember sitting in the back of the room and thinking, how do you handle this one? You know, what do you say? So he thought for a minute and he said, "Well, if you don't know, I can't help you." It really brought down the house. You could just see it turn so many people. There was a labor guy there, a white-headed labor fellow, a little Irishman, Pat somebody or other, who stood up in the middle of the thing and said, "I don't care what's going on here, I don't care what's happening. I'm for you, and by God we are going to get everybody for you." You know, the whole thing was just almost a love feast.

HACKMAN: Was there a lot of difficulty during the campaign in getting him to do what you and what O'Donnell thought needed to be done, as opposed to spending all of his time doing other kinds of things that other people may have thought he should have done? Obviously, there is a time problem.

REILLY: Yes. No more than the normal trouble. I mean, everybody in a campaign thinks they must have the candidate at all times or as much as possible. But I think those people who were working in the convention states and in the nonprimary states recognized the fact that he had to go the primary route, that he had to show his strength, that he had to work hard in those states. We felt that we lost a lot of ground, particularly after the Johnson withdrawal, because he was not able to go to those places, and urged him frankly to do it more, but he couldn't. I mean, it was necessary for him to spend time in Nebraska, it was necessary for him to spend time in Indiana, obviously, and it would have been great to run him into Pennsylvania twice. But the plan always was that right after California he would begin to concentrate on those states, and we had absolutely no question in our mind that two more trips into Ohio was all, it was over, that two to three trips into Pennsylvania and that support would have switched to him. New Jersey was similar, Michigan. . . .

HACKMAN: Leaving aside the problems of confusion and lack of time, what kind of a comparison can you make between him and John Kennedy as a campaigner, particularly when he is in the kinds of situations that people don't see? In meetings with people, or in this kind of Ohio day. Is there really a great difference in the way he handles this situation?

REILLY: I think that you can make a generalization that he was a much more frenetic campaigner than President

Kennedy, but the times were different so that's explained by that. President Kennedy in a room full of locals, I think, was better in that he identified more easily with the individuals than Bob Kennedy did. Bob Kennedy was somewhat standoffish, some of it from shyness. He found it difficult to relate, I mean, he found it difficult to make the small talk.

HACKMAN: He enjoyed it much less?

REILLY: I think he enjoyed doing it much less. Obviously he knew it was necessary, but he just could not sit or stand and have some guy explain what was happening in, you know, Ypsilanti.

HACKMAN: Maybe you could talk just about New Jersey a little bit. Again, once you decide not to go in, is there anything else, particularly Hughes? How do you deal with the Hughes thing? He seems to be on again, off again in terms of entering that popularity contest prior to the primary.

REILLY: Well, the decision was made, as you alluded to, that we would not challenge the organization there. I think there was a pretty good understanding that, were we to challenge him, it would have been very divisive, but we would probably have been successful. The decision was made on the basis that we didn't have to because those people were with us anyhow. I don't think Hughes was playing games at all. I think he was very, very seriously for Bob Kennedy. And I was present at at least two meetings that I can recall with just the governor and Bob, the secretary of state. . . .

HACKMAN: Bob [Robert J.] Burkhardt.

REILLY: . . . Burkhardt, Matty Ryan, O'Donnell and myself. That was it, and, of course we knew John Kenny [John V. Kenny] and people of that nature, leaders in their own countries were supporting Bob Kennedy. So actually the work that we did in those areas was not too much, you know, simply because we just always felt we didn't have to. I remember Kenny got a call from Ted Kennedy one time, and Ted said, "Jeez, I got this report that the New Jersey people are off and we are not going to get them. They are going to go for Hubert," and so on. And Kenny said, "Well, I can't do any more than tell you that that's wrong, that we have them locked, that's over and done there, and that unless somebody screws it up, it's ours." And I remember Teddy saying, "Well, I hope to hell you are right."

HACKMAN: Is there ever enough concern about the McCarthy slate in New Jersey so that you really think about gearing up, either moneywise or some way to help the

organizational candidates?

REILLY No. Our support of them never involved money. I mean, our support of them was that the Kennedy people were told to support them or not told, but could support them. We were rather careful, because we always felt that the McCarthy people were ours anyhow, eventually. It was just a question of when.

HACKMAN: Do you know anything, or have any feeling for an operation supposedly called the grass roots operation run by a guy named Fraser Barron out of Dave [David L.] Hackett and [K. Dunn] Gifford's operation in Washington, funding people like George Richardson, as a name in New Jersey?

REILLY: Absolutely no feeling for it.

HACKMAN: You don't remember it complicating your life a lot?

REILLY: Well, it was just something that was kind of happening out there that we would be constantly explaining, you know, "Don't pay any attention. It's not really our. . . ." Now today you gave people turning up claiming to be active in Bob Kennedy's campaign. You know, they're people we never heard of who were doing that type of thing, and they were active.

HACKMAN: How helpful or important is Dungan in New Jersey?

REILLY: Very.

HACKMAN: For what? Information or. . . .

REILLY: Information and whatever. I mean, he was influential.

HACKMAN: He could deal with people like, well, obviously, Hughes, but. . . .

REILLY: Oh, yes. He was there, and constantly picking up whatever was happening. And also, since he was identified as a Kennedy man, people would talk to him, so he was extremely important.

HACKMAN: How about [Frank, Jr.] Topper Thompson?

REILLY: Topper was very important.

HACKMAN: All right. The only other state, really, is Pennsylvania. Can you remember anything specifically about Edward Kennedy's trip in, at that point where

they are trying to keep the delegates from polling the delegation, in effect, to indicate Humphrey support?

REILLY: I think they are two different things. Teddy made a trip in there actually immediately prior to the caucus of the Pennsylvania delegation, which was very, very helpful. I mean, he was treated like the candidate, and mobbed and so on. We ran as many delegates through to see him as we possibly could. We felt that he should be there more, but his schedule was such that he couldn't be. His trip up there was very helpful, simply because he was the Kennedy presidency. Since we couldn't have the candidate, he was obviously the best man. The attempt to head off the polling of the . . . His trip was part of that--excuse me--but had to be followed up by the people we had in Pennsylvania, Ben Smith [Benjamin A. Smith II] and Dave [A. David Mazzone]. . . .

HACKMAN: That was Jim Smith [James H. Smith] and Dave. . . .

REILLY: Jim Smith in Pittsburgh, and Dave--an Italian name. . . .

HACKMAN: I can't remember it, if I have it written down somewhere.

REILLY: . . . was assistant United States attorney from Massachusetts. At one time he played football with Bobby. Jesus. Anyhow, those people had to follow it up, and it was a constant problem because we didn't have the support. So the attempt was to keep the delegation, one, from caucusing, which we were unsuccessful because they were forcing the caucus; two, at the time of the caucus to attempt to keep them from polling; and three, if they did poll, to try to get as many people uncommitted as possible so that Humphrey wouldn't be able to use the results to show his strength in the major states. We were weak in Pennsylvania because of the strength of Jim Tate in Philadelphia; because Joe Barr, although he was waffling, was going along with the Tates. We felt that the McCarthy delegates, those who had won, been selected as McCarthy delegates, were ours. And our strategy, of course, was that as soon as we got Senator Kennedy, Bob Kennedy, in there, we. . . . [End of Side 1]

HACKMAN: You were talking about Barr and a . . . ?

REILLY: You know, the strategy was to hold it as long, as best we could, and get the candidate in there because our feeling--I think it was true--was that the Humphrey support was not very deep, and that once Bob got going that he could grab a lot of it. In fact, we worked on that basis. We never really turned Joe Barr off because we always felt we would have Barr. We did feel that Tate was

gone, although we didn't want to get him too upset simply because we might get him back. Billy Green coming out for us certainly did not help us with Tate, but Billy Green was helpful with the McCarthy people, or the younger people, and so on. So the attempt was being made, once we were unsuccessful, in keeping them from caucusing and keeping them from polling then the attempt was to keep them uncommitted. We tried to get the McCarthy delegates to go uncommitted, and we had them.

Actually, this is a pretty good story. I didn't know it until after the whole thing was all over, but we had the McCarthy delegates in a room and we had convinced them that the way that they would best hold off Humphrey was to remain uncommitted; that although we weren't asking them to stop their support of Eugene McCarthy, and so on. Everybody was beginning to realize at that point that Senator McCarthy was not going to make it. There was a phone call came into the head of the delegation in this room, and after the phone call, we were asked to leave--O'Donnell and myself, and the other fellows, Ben Smith, Jim Smith, both of them--and when we went back in the room they said, "Well, we are going to vote for McCarthy," which was quite a disappointment to us. And as we inquired around, the information we had was that that had been a phone call from [Thomas D., Jr.] Tom Finney. Have you heard this story?

HACKMAN: Kenny told it to me, but I did not. . . .It must have been at the end of an interview or something, and I never sort of tied it together, so I wish you would go through it and try to make sense out of it.

REILLY: Okay. Well, the story we got was that the telephone call had been from Tom Finney saying that Senator McCarthy was sending a message through him that he did not want them to vote uncommitted; that he wanted them to declare themselves for him in the caucus. So we lost them all. And I think we ended up the caucus in bad shape, with about 14 delegates, or something like that. It just was a mess. They had the complete control of the caucus. Subsequently I learned that that telephone call was not from Tom Finney at all. The telephone call was from [Walter F.] Fitz Mondale. . . .

HACKMAN: Ah!

REILLY:Who knew what we were doing. And of course Fitz and Harris [Fred R. Harris] were running Hubert's campaign, and were there, and Fritz being one of the best damn politicians I have ever met, makes the phone call, says he is Tom Finney. . . .

HACKMAN: That's a great story.

REILLY: . . .and overturns. . . .And it is a true story, and Fritz has told me that.

HACKMAN: Are there people around McCarthy, with some influence in the McCarthy campaign, that you knew well enough so that you could try to work with on things like this, and you could get a feel for McCarthy's thinking on cooperation?

REILLY: No. I had absolutely no connection within it, and I am not aware of anybody else having any. In a given state, with the locals, it was possible, but as far as the people who were around McCarthy. . . .I mean, the thing we were constantly trying to do was not turn them off, but the people around him. . . .I just never had any way of getting into it.

HACKMAN: Do you recall any other instances where cooperation was almost worked out with the McCarthy people, and then fell through because he wanted to pull out on it? Pennsylvania's the. . . .

REILLY: None that I can recall.

HACKMAN: What about working on labor leaders? Maybe leaving aside the UAW [United Auto Workers] thing, because I've talked to Conway a lot about that. Are there labor leaders that you spent much time with, or situations that you know much about? Particularly where there was support maybe coming later down the line but they just could not talk about it at that point, I think.

REILLY: Well, Joe Keegan [sic] [Joseph D. Keenan] is the best example of that [International Brotherhood of] Electrical Workers brat. Joe Keegan was fully committed to us, but couldn't do it. Quite frankly, when I think back on it, Kenny kept most of that to his. . . .I mean, that was pretty much his own little bag. I didn't get into it very often.

HACKMAN: Any other states, other than the big ones we've talked about, where you had your lines in? People that you recall?

REILLY: Oh, we fiddled in Maine, got involved in a fight with [Edmund S.] Muskie and [Kenneth M.] Curtis. Iowa. I'd say that was about it, that I ever had anything to do with.

HACKMAN: Any former Justice Department people or U.S. attorneys around the country that you can remember working hard on, who were not supporting Robert

Kennedy?

REILLY: Not a one. That was the amazing thing, really. I mean, they were all. . . . The problem was trying to have something for them to do. They were all so active that they all wanted to do things. The problem was finding something for them to do at that point.

HACKMAN: Any conversations with Robert Kennedy during the campaign?

REILLY: Well, yes, at Columbus [Ohio], then from there I went to Nebraska with him for the night of the Nebraska primary, and sat with him on the plane going from Nebraska back to Detroit the day after the Nebraska primary, in which I gave him a full report on the status of Congress, or the members of Congress, which was really the purpose of my continuing on the trip.

HACKMAN: How did you put that thing together? Maybe that is something we ought to talk about.

REILLY: The congressional thing? Well, first of all I made as many contacts as I possibly could and found out that it was damned impossible to be seeing them all, because they were all over the lot. so what we did, we kind of organized our own little whip system up there with [John C.] Culver, Topper Thompson, Bill [William D.] Hathaway, Tom [Thomas S.] Foley, a couple of others who then were given responsibility of various delegations and could find out where the members stood and how they stood. And that was the procedure which I set up, and that was one. . . . Then we'd meet, and actually they were finding out, well, first of all, where the particular Democratic congressman stood, whether he was supportive of Bob Kennedy or for Hubert; and, two, whether he was willing to announce it; three, whether he was going to the convention and whether he controlled any delegates. That was the way we had set it up, and it was just beginning to really function when Bob died.

HACKMAN: Anything on paper on that, in terms of numbers of commitments?

REILLY: Yes, I have somewhere a list which I had drawn up of most of the Democratic congressmen and where they stood at the end of May. So many of them were standing back waiting to see what happened in California. I have it somewhere. I could probably dig it out.

HACKMAN: Okay. Good.

REILLY: But I think those four or five that I mentioned were

essentially the group that was working as a kind of whip. Strange things happened in that one. For instance, you take John [C.] Watts, since deceased, Kentucky, a very powerful congressman both in the Congress and in his own state, and he fully backed Bob Kennedy but couldn't say anything about it. When the time came, would have been there. I mean there were so many of those that we were aware of. We had absolutely no question once they made their commitment to us that they were ours, but we couldn't use them yet.

In fact, I remember putting into the boiler room at one time the information that, "John Watts is with us, but please don't talk about it in Kentucky." Johnston was down in Kentucky and I got a call from him, and he said, "Well, you're wrong. John Watts is not with us." I said, "Tell me where you get your information." He said, "All his people down here say he isn't with us." And I said, "Well, alright now, I've talked to John Watts and he's with us, and he has not talked to any of his people and doesn't intend to until the time comes, but we're not to say anything about it." So the next call I get is from John Watts saying, "I thought I told you not to say anything." And I said, "Well I haven't, Congressman." "Well," he said, "your man down there is telling all my people that I have committed myself to Bob Kennedy." You know, so then we ran around trying to solve that damn thing. That was an example of. . . John Watts perhaps had six delegates, but those six would have been very influential within the Kentucky group.

HACKMAN: Well, we've got those black books so there is probably a little note in there.

REILLY: The what?

HACKMAN: I said, "We have all those black books from the boiler room, so there is probably a little note in there."

REILLY: Oh, do you. There is probably a note in there with a question mark saying, "Reilly's off his rocker." [Laughter].

HACKMAN: I'm sure you've heard this from everybody you've talked to. . . .

REILLY: The sad part of the whole damn thing was, that it was just at the point where it was jelling Newsweek or Time or something would say, "Well, Bobby may be doing great in the primaries and may be doing all this, but Hubert's really making time in the major states." And Jesus, Illinois. And someone would say "Rumors are that Mayor Daley's with him, and rumors are that Dick Hughes is with him," and "Witness 80 delegates in clear for him in Pennsylvania." And

we couldn't do a thing about it. I mean, we just couldn't stop that, because what we we going to do? Go back and say, Yeah, but Mayor Daley is really for us?" The fact was, we knew it was there. The only thing we had to worry about was the influence that those articles had on others who were trying to make up their mind.

HACKMAN: How important is Oregon? Does Oregon worry you at all?

REILLY: No, Oregon never really bothered me. In fact, I had the feeling at the time--and it has since been borne out by people who were much more identified with the trips from. . . I mean, Oregon into California in the early days of the California campaign--that it was really wonderful--not wonderful, I mean, it was a terrible thing, but it was really helpful--in that what happened, it took some pressure off Bob Kennedy in never having been defeated. It bothered him having been the first Kennedy that was defeated, but what it did was galvanize an awful lot of support where people were sitting back saying, "Well, they don't need me," and so on and so forth. And then all of a sudden once they found out that it was a troublesome campaign, and that there was going to be other Oregons and other disappointments, everybody had to work pretty hard. I mean, I'm not talking about only the people within the campaign, I'm talking about support that came because of that. That was the only value of Oregon.

HACKMAN: Yes. You were referring earlier, when we were looking at your files, about the little thing about wanting your credit card back. How would you compare spending controls in '68 to earlier campaigns you've been identified with? Was that a major problem to you, that there were too many people involved, lack of controls?

REILLY: Yes. Well, something had to be done about the spending very quickly and again, that was one of those things that was going to be done after California. But they were very careful about the credit cards. You know, there weren't many people walking around with airline credit cards or telephone credit cards, which were the only two things that were being used. That was under pretty good control, and of course [Stephen E.] Steve Smith, you know, was constantly on everybody's back, but because the thing grew the way it did, and so quickly, it wasn't under full control yet.

HACKMAN: That's really all I've got.

REILLY: Well, fine. May I check and see what I've got to do, and then. . . .